

Panel discussion:  
**Responsible Research  
Assessment - with or without  
the Nordic bibliometric  
indicator**

Nordic Workshop on Bibliometrics and Research Policy

13.10.2023 Göteborg

# Schedule

1. Presentation of the panel
2. Introduction to the Nordic indicator
3. Panel discussion
  1. What is the most important change in the use of the Nordic bibliometric indicator in your country/institution?
  2. What have been the main concerns about the uses of the indicator with respect to the RRA agenda and the CoARA Agreement?
  3. What is the role of journal evaluation (by citation metrics or experts) in addressing predatory, questionable, deceptive and low-quality publishing practices?
4. Questions & Comments

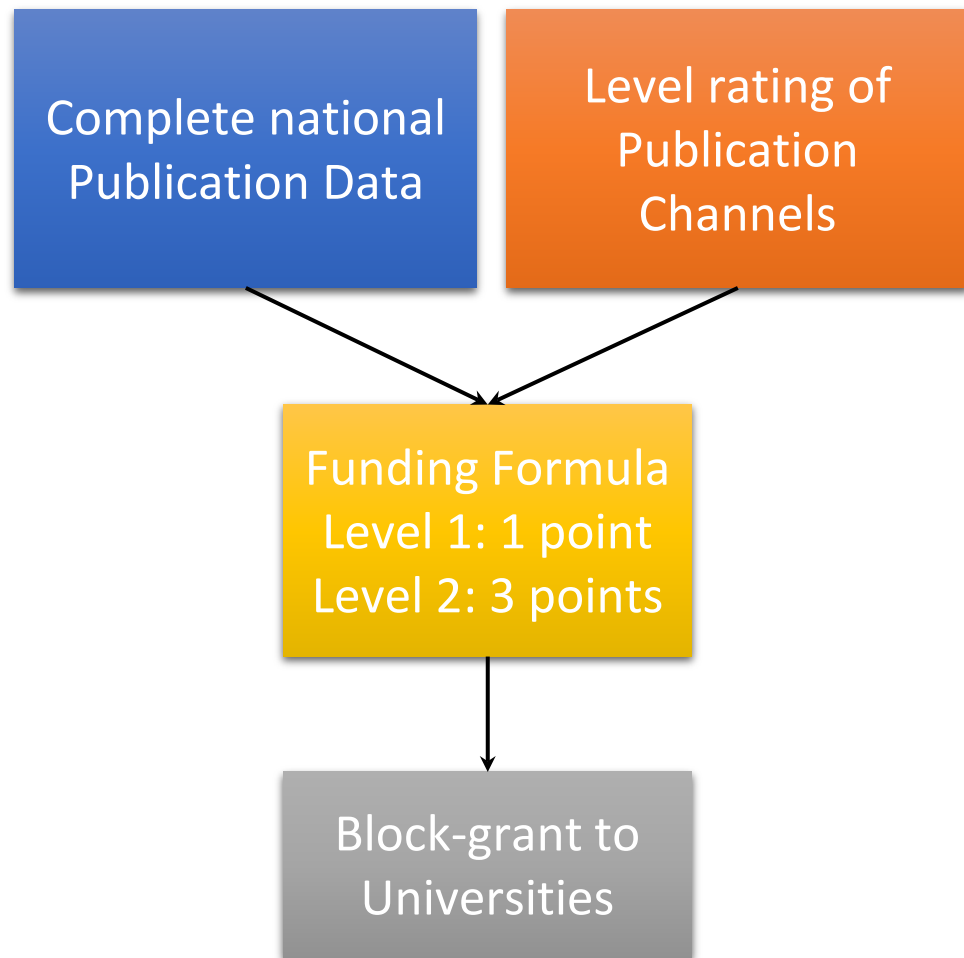
# Panel

Moderator: **Janne Pölönen** (Federation of Finnish Learned Societies)

## Panelists

- Denmark: **Marianne Gauffriau** (IT University of Copenhagen)
- Finland: **Laura Niemi** (University of Turku)
- Iceland: **Baldvin Zarióh** (University of Iceland)
- Norway: **Gunnar Sivertsen** (Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education)
- Sweden: **Björn Hammarfelt** (University of Borås)

# Nordic Publication Indicator



- **Norway (2005-2023):** Publiseringsindikatoren (NPI) or Tellekantene
- **Denmark (2007-2021):** Den bibliometriske forskningsindikator (BFI)
- **Finland (2015-2024?):** Julkaisufoorumi (JUFO)
- **Sweden (Not in PRFS):** Norska listan or Norska modellen in Sweden used internally by thirteen Swedish universities
- **Iceland: (2019-):** The Norwegian, Danish and Finnish lists used as supporting tool since 2019 and the Finnish list more extensively since 2022

# CoARA – Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

- Agreement for Reforming Research Assessment published in July 2022
- Over 600 organisations have signed
- Nordic countries (organisations):
  - Denmark: 8
  - Finland: 33
  - Iceland: 2
  - Norway: 19
  - Sweden: 24

## 4 Core Commitments:

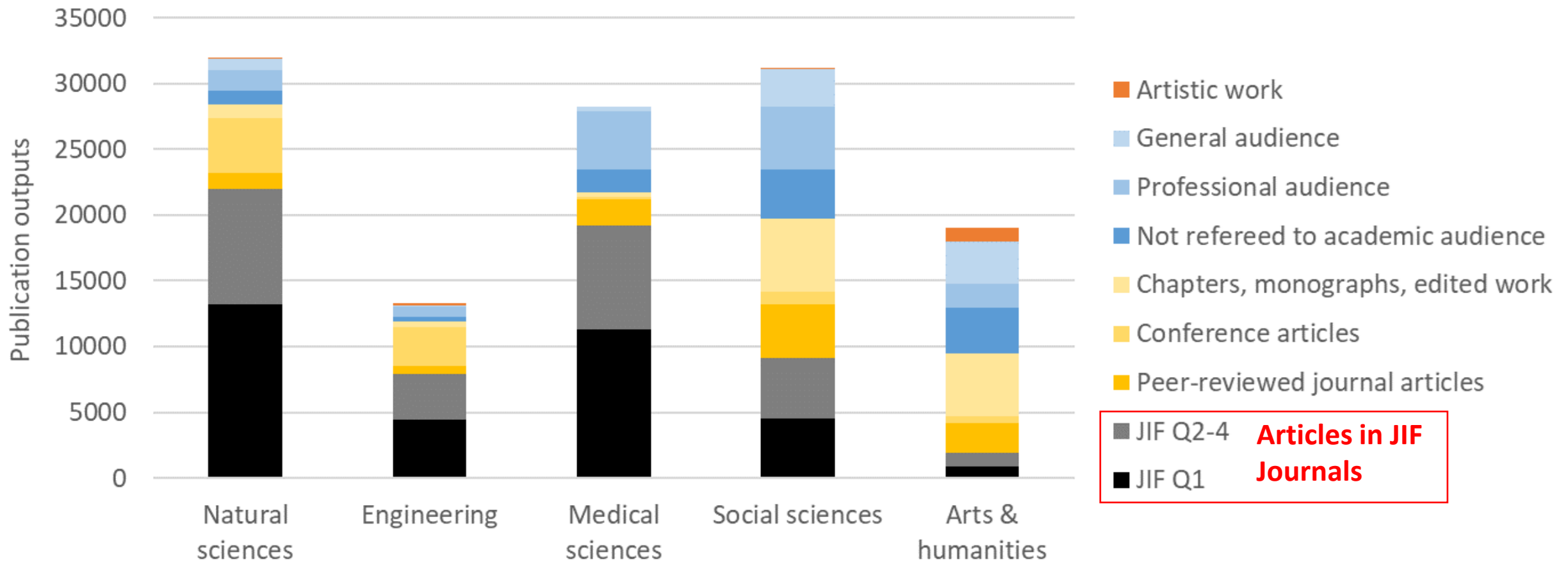
1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research.
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation... supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators
3. Abandon inappropriate uses of journal- and publication- based metrics (JIF, H-index)
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment

AGREEMENT ON REFORMING  
RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

20 July 2022

# Finnish Universities' publication output 2019-2021: CRIS vs JIF based assessment

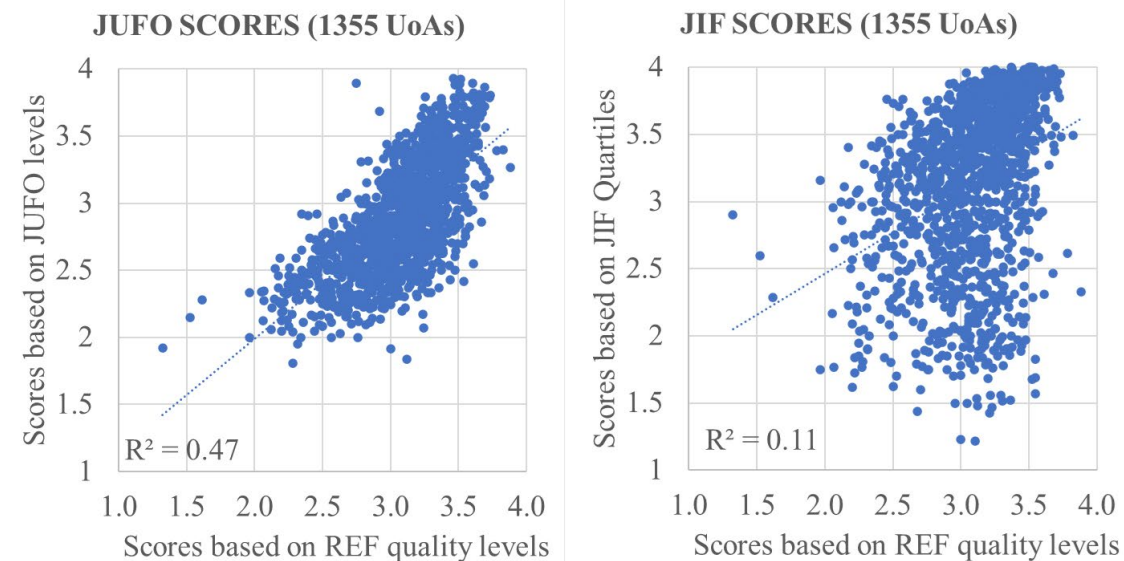
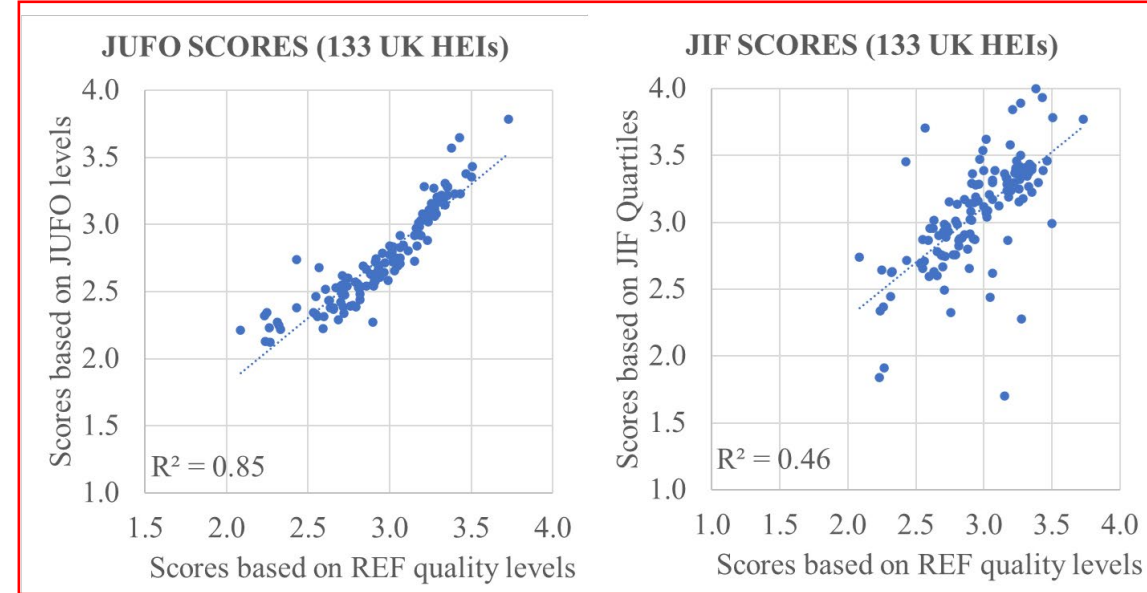
Finnish Universities' publication output 2019-2021



# Expert-based journal evaluation vs JIF-based rankings

- The Finnish expert-based JUFO level ratings of journals produce scores correlating more strongly with expert-based REF2021 scores than those based JIF Quartiles
- Journal metrics show a much weaker correlation with REF-based scores at the lower aggregate level of institutional Units of Assessment

Pölonen, Guns & Engels (2023) Journal metrics as predictors of Research Excellence Framework 2021 results: Comparison of impact factor quartiles and Finnish expert-ratings, STI2023 Leiden



# Journal Quality Concerns



- Council calls on the Commission and the member states to support scholarly publishing model that is not-for-profit, open access and multi-format, with no costs for authors or readers.
- Rigorous peer-review, ensuring scientific standards, validity and quality
- Awareness of predatory, questionable, deceptive and low-quality publishing

## OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

On: 23 May 2023

To: Delegations

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No. prev. doc.: 8827/23

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Subject: High-quality, transparent, open, trustworthy and equitable scholarly publishing  
- Council conclusions (approved on 23 May 2023)

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9. STRESSES that rigorous peer review should continue to be essential to scholarly publishing, with researchers taking responsibility for peer review and providing expert advice on editorial boards, ensuring scientific standards, validity and quality of the research; EMPHASISES that
20. INVITES Member States, in collaboration with the Commission, to address in a systemic manner the issue of predatory publishing and to promote and support training on responsible, open and ethical publishing practices for students and researchers at all career stages, thereby providing them with the skills and competencies they need, as well as to ensure adequate training and awareness on predatory, questionable, deceptive and low-quality publishing practices and their negative impact on reliability of research.



What is the most important change in the use of the Nordic bibliometric indicator in your country/institution?

# Denmark (Marianne Gauffriau)

Nordic Publication Indicator: Going from with to without

2 0 0 9    2 0 1 0    ...    2 0 2 0    2 0 2 1    2 0 2 2    2 0 2 3    2 0

Den bibliometriske forskningsindikator (BFI),  
Nordic Publication Indicator

## National level

**2009-2021:** Updated BFI points contributed to a performance-based funding system.

**2022-?:** Monitoring and ad hoc analyses of Danish research publications via [RPD](#) and international databases.

## Institutional level, two cases

**2023-?:** Aalborg University: New 'BFI' for a budget model and other purposes. ([The AAU Research Indicator](#))

**2022-?:** IT University: BFI used in scoring system. Open question whether a replacement for BFI will be introduced.

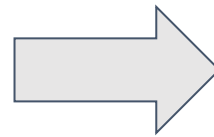
Research Portal  
Denmark (RPD)

# Finland (Laura Niemi)

Scientific publications have been used as a quantitative indicator of university funding since 2007 and until 2009, 0.3% of the basic funding of universities was granted on the basis of publications.

Publication Forum – in Finnish Julkaisufoorumi, or JUFO was created in 2010 and in 2010–2012 the number of publications accounted for 1.7% of the basic funding of universities.

Since 2015, 13 % of the universities' basic funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture is based on publications.



Since 2021, the importance on publications was grown from 13% to 14%, and a coefficient of 1,2 is applied to openly accessible peer-reviewed publications.

Most Finnish universities make use of the JUFO classification for monitoring and developing their publishing activities.

Many Finnish universities have incorporated the JUFO classification within their internal funding allocations as well as reward schemes for individual academics.

# Iceland (Baldvin Zarióh)

The Nordic bibliometric indicators have been used in Iceland as part of a yearly research evaluation exercise of public universities but along with other tools (WOS, Scopus, domestic journal evaluation).

Hasn't had any influence on public funding of universities in Iceland.

Results from the yearly evaluation influences the internal distribution model of the University of Iceland.

A new funding model of Icelandic universities introduced on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, which will include incentives for “publication indicators”

This new model may have influence on the yearly evaluation, how that is performed, and on the internal distribution model of the University of Iceland but there are a lot of uncertainties.

# Norway (Gunnar Sivertsen)

In March 2023, the Norwegian Government decided that the indicator will cease to influence the funding of higher education institutions as of 2025.

It will still influence the basic research funding in the institute sector (20% of the publications) and the hospital sector (17%).

Publications will still be reported in all three sectors and used for statistics and other purposes. The Register of journals, series and publishers will continue.

The Government has commissioned a project running until June 2024 to investigate the consequences of its decision, for example the motivation of researchers and their institutions to report complete data of good quality.

# Sweden (Björn Hammarfelt)

The influential model that never was (Hammarfelt 2018)

Not used on the national level, but applied in various ways across institutions.

Focus on the list - not the model. The list is used for both evaluation and benchmarking.

Creative use. Combination with other systems, extra points, or points for artistic work.

What have been the main concerns about the uses of the indicator with respect to the RRA agenda and the CoARA Agreement?

# Denmark (Marianne Gauffriau)

Three independent developments

2 0 0 9    2 0 1 0    ...    2 0 2 0    2 0 2 1    2 0 2 2    2 0 2 3    2 0

Den bibliometriske forskningsindikator (BFI),  
Nordic Publication Indicator

**Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science:** No decision has been taken on a replacement for the BFI.

**ARRA signatory:** BFI was terminated before we signed ARRA.

**RPD:** We facilitate the discovery and exploration of Danish research.

- 🤔 An opportunity to discuss national research portals and RRA?
- Portals are not an assessment tool, but ...
  - Dynamic portals versus static evaluation reports.
  - Easy to add metrics: SDG, ...  
([See also preliminary work, L. Himanen](#))

Research Portal  
Denmark (RPD)

Agreement on  
Reforming Research  
Assessment (ARRA)



# Finland (Laura Niemi)

The Finnish higher education system consists of 13 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences.



Currently 12 universities and 17 universities of applied sciences are CoARA signatories

The core CoARA commitments include two commitments to enable better recognition of the diverse practices and activities that maximise the quality of research as well as two commitments to enable a move away from inappropriate uses of metrics.

The main concern: Changing an existing culture!

# Iceland (Baldvin Zarióh)

This discussion has not started in Iceland (even though both the University of Iceland and RANNÍS, the Icelandic Centre for Research have signed the CoARA Agreement).

The principles of the the Icelandic research evaluation system haven't changed drastically for over 20 years but the system is not only evaluation publications (also other dissemination of research, teaching and services for the academic community and for the public), so that should give us room for improvements in accordance to RRA and the CoARA agreement

# Norway (Gunnar Sivertsen)

The use of the indicator at the individual level, which is an organizational level responsibility, has been a concern all the time.

The National Publishing Board (responsible for the indicator and representing academia) has addressed this concern in two ways: 1) by redesigning the indicator to make it technically difficult to apply to the level of individuals, and 2) by issuing guidelines for individual level bibliometrics which explain the implications of DORA and the Leiden Manifesto more concretely and extensively.

The same guidelines were republished in NOR-CAM (2021), the Norwegian forerunner of the CoARA agreement (2022). The latter agreement has not evoked new discussions about the indicator.

Motivated by the strive for Open Access, DORA was used as a critique of the indicator until 2019, which was the start of entering Publish and Read agreements with the major publishers of the core scientific journals that are at the highest level in the indicator.

# Sweden (Björn Hammarfelt)

Universities seem to agree on the principles of CoARA, but this is yet to be reflected in practice

Somewhat dependent on research policy in Sweden more generally. Is 'excellence' back as the primary goal?

Bibliometricians are sceptical to the strong focus on peer review in CoARA. Key question: What is responsible in this context? And when may it be irresponsible to use peer review?

(See document on CoARA authored by the "SUHFs working group on bibliometrics: <https://suhf.se/arbetsgrupper/arbetsgruppen-for-bibliometri/>)

What is the role of journal evaluation (by citation metrics or experts) in addressing predatory, questionable, deceptive and low-quality publishing practices?

# Denmark (Marianne Gauffriau)

Journals and publications in research assessments

2 0 0 9    2 0 1 0    ...    2 0 2 0    2 0 2 1    2 0 2 2    2 0 2 3    2 0

Den bibliometriske forskningsindikator (BFI),  
Nordic Publication Indicator

## Complex journal landscape

Many publication types and different routes to publication.

Different definitions of predatory, questionable, etc. publishing practices, e.g., is open science important?

In practice, **whitelists** (based on citation metrics and/or experts' evaluation) seem important:

- ~~BFI~~
- Aalborg University's 'BFI': Scopus, Norwegian list, and Finnish list.
- 🤖 RPD: Inclusion > exclusion.
- 🤖 RRA: **Peer review > metrics.**

Research Portal  
Denmark (RPD)

Agreement on  
Reforming Research  
Assessment (ARRA)

# Finland (Laura Niemi)

Evaluation is needed because it...

- shapes the operating culture by creating assumptions

- serves as a tool for research organizations

- advance and improve the impact of research

# Iceland (Baldvin Zarióh)

Iceland does not have the capacity to evaluate journals qualitative and maintain an independent list of reputable journals, so the Icelandic evaluation system relies on information from Scopus, WOS and the nordic lists.

Inclusion in Scopus and/or WOS (and impact factors) have been the main indicators used for the evaluation of publications in Iceland, which is far from ideal and have presented problems.



# Norway (Gunnar Sivertsen)

*The Norwegian Register of Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers* has gradually developed to serve the additional purpose of a “whitelist” of journals recommended by experienced researchers in all fields of research.

The need for this function has now been strongly emphasised and will be supported by the Government.

*Quantitative* journal evaluation (e.g. Journal Impact Factors) has proved unsuccessful in detecting questionable publishing practices.

*Qualitative* journal evaluation performed by panels of experienced researchers is the future.

We need to return to the idea of the *Nordic List* to move forward with a good example of a solution to predatory and grey-zone publishing.

# Sweden (Björn Hammarfelt)

The Norwegian list seems to work as a kind “white list” at some universities (for example Linköping)

Marker of quality also when marketing journals to authors, funders etc.

Increasingly hard to use metrics, impact factors or various lists to evaluate journals? Do we need a updated understanding of what a journal is, and what it does?

# Comments & Questions